

## Today in Columbus History:

On May 12, 1875, the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* carried a notice under the headline "Rankin House" alerting everyone that Mrs. F. M. Gray had taken charge of the Rankin House in downtown Columbus. Mrs. F. M. Gray was Mentoria Elizabeth Mead Gray, the wife of Francis Marion Gray. They were married in Columbus in October 1846 and had three children, Alice Mead (b. 1847), Marion Edgar (b. 1849) and Ida Eugenia (b. 1855) who died before she was two. Prior to the Civil War, he held the position of bookkeeper at the *Columbus Daily Sun* and as both bookkeeper and local editor for the *Columbus Daily Times*. In February 1862, he joined Co. K of the 37<sup>th</sup> Georgia Regiment.

Gray was not well suited for military service. His obituary in the *Columbus Daily Times*, said, part:

"we were satisfied at the time that his feeble health disqualified him for the arduous duties of the soldier's life. So it has proven. The exhausting march into Tennessee, and the rigor of the present winter, in that locality was too much for a constitution already enervated by the ravages of disease"

He was captured in December 1864 at the Battle of Nashville and died of pneumonia at Camp Douglas near Chicago on January 31, 1865. Camp Douglas is often referred to as the "North's Andersonville." After the War, the dead from Camp Douglas were dug up and moved to Oak Woods Cemetery, where they were buried in a mass grave. Francis is listed on one of the bronze plaques that name approximately 4,200 Confederate dead buried at what is known as the Confederate Mound. Unfortunately, he is misidentified as T. M. Gray of Co. K of the 37<sup>th</sup> Georgia Regiment. The obituary for Francis did not appear in the *Columbus Daily Times* until March 15, 1865, six weeks after his death and only a month before the "Last Battle of the Civil War" played out in Columbus.

After the war, Mrs. Gray had to find a way to support herself and her two surviving children Edgar and Alice. Operating hotels seemed to suit her. According to a notice in the *Weekly Sun*, of December 7, 1869, she had reopened the Planters Hotel. That hotel was at 122 Broad St. next to the Iron Bank. After a couple of years, she moved on. A notice from the 1871 paper shows that she was leaving the Planters Hotel for the Central Hotel which was located at 140 and 142 Broad St. in the middle of the same block as the Planters Hotel. Apparently, she was able to buy the Central Hotel, as she sold it in 1875 to another widow, Mrs. Sarah Elizabeth Wooldridge (soon to be Mrs. William J. Chaffin in 1876) so she could take over the Rankin. That hotel is located on the same block, down Broad St. at the corner of Crawford (now 10<sup>th</sup> St.). It was that sale and Mrs. Gray's move to the Rankin that generated the notice on May 5, 1875.

Her career in the hotel business was not a terribly long one. Mrs. Gray was no longer proprietress of the Rankin by 1878 when the *Columbus Daily Times* of July 6, mentions J.M. Estes as proprietor. Mrs. Gray still lived there on occasion, however. Her career must have been profitable. Throughout the 1880's, Mrs. Gray was socially active and is generally noted in the personal columns arriving from or departing on various trips From New York to New Orleans. She also invested in railroads and was listed as one of the 70 people in Columbus who owned a house worth \$5,000 or more in 1885, although she just barely made the list.

Mrs. Gray never remarried and in her later years, was able to take advantage of the support from a Confederate widow's pension. Ancestry.com shows her pension application forms from 1891 until 1907.

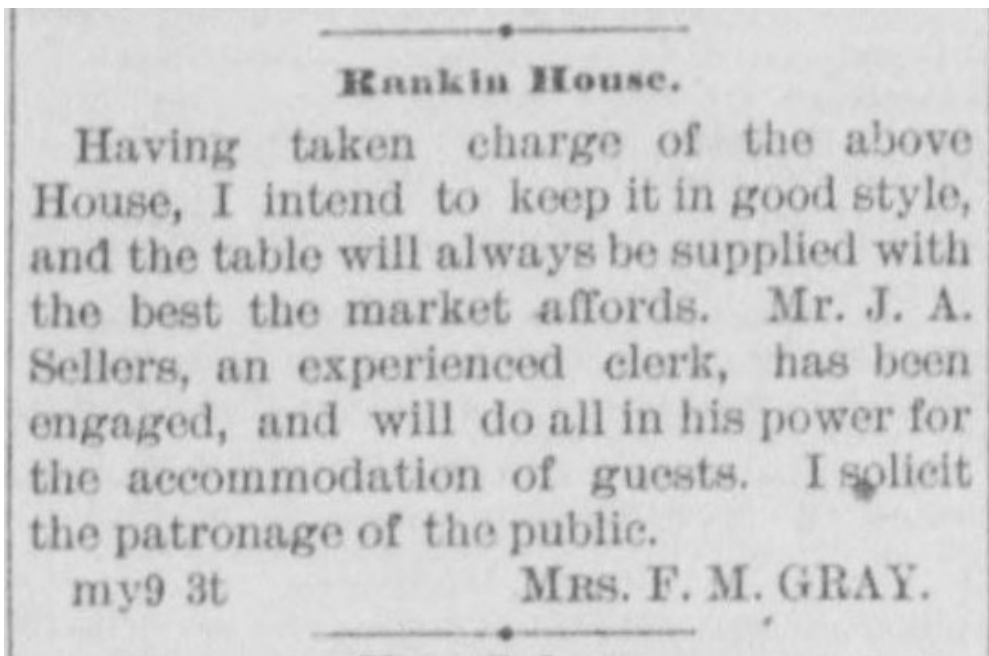
Mrs. Gray and her son Edgar died within days of each in July 1909 and were buried in Linwood Cemetery, although not together. She died of paralysis and was buried on July 14 and Edgar died of angina pectoris

or intense coronary disorder and was buried on July 21, 1909. The last survivor of the family, Alice Gray Daniel, died in 1931 and is buried with her husband James Thomas Daniel in Linwood, as well.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

*Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.*



Notice that Mrs. F. M. Gray has taken charge of the Rankin House from *Columbus Daily Enquirer* on May 12, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



F. M. Gray's final resting place at the Confederate Mound, Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, IL, from Wikipedia.org, photo credit: John Delano of Hammond, Indiana.



Listing of Francis Marion Gray (as T. M. Gray) Co. K 37<sup>th</sup> GA Regiment at the Confederate Mound in Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois, from [graveyards.com](http://graveyards.com)

## Central Hotel.

HAVING sold this Hotel to Mrs. S. E. WOLDRIDGE, late of the Quincy House, Quincy, Fla., I take this occasion to return thanks to my friends and the public for the liberal patronage they have extended me, and to solicit a continuance of the same for my successor.

Mr. SELLERS will remain at the Hotel several days, and those indebted to me will call and settle with him.

MRS. F. M. GRAY.

Having bought the Central Hotel from Mrs. F. M. Gray, I would respectfully solicit the patronage of the citizens of Columbus and the traveling public generally.

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MRS. S. E. WOLDRIDGE.

Notice of the sale of the Central Hotel by Mrs. F. M. Gray to Mrs. Sarah Elizabeth Wooldridge from *Columbus Daily Times* on February 10, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

## Mrs. F. M. GRAY

TAKES this method of notifying the public that she has moved from the Planters' Hotel to the

### CENTRAL HOTEL,

EAST SIDE OF BROAD STREET, JUST NORTH OF THE  
RANKIN HOUSE,

Where she is prepared to accommodate boarders and the traveling public.

This location is in the midst of the business portion of the city, which will commend it to those who consult convenience and dispatch. She pledges her best efforts to the comfort and entertainment of her friends and visitors, and hopes to have a continuance of the liberal patronage heretofore extended to her.

Columbus, Ga., April, 1871 [apr21 dlwawlm

Notice that Mrs. F.M. Gray has moved from the Planters Hotel to the Central Hotel from *Weekly Columbus Enquirer* on May 23, 1871, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

PLANTER'S HOTEL. — Mrs. F. M. Gray has reopened this popular house both to permanent and transient customers. All may rely upon securing the best of accommodations at this hotel. See notice.

Notice that Mrs. F.M. Gray has reopened the Planters Hotel from *Weekly Sun* on December 7, 1869, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Grave of Mrs. F. M. Gray in Linwood Cemetery from [FindAGrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com/)